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Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEWS

History of Titus County, Texas. By Traylor Russell. Published by W. M. Morrison, Waco, Texas, 1965. Limited First Edition, 400 copies. 286 pages. Illustrations. $10.00.

Mr. Russell presents us with a composite of one hundred articles, each one a brief item of history on early Titus County families and events. Having collected these items over a number of years, he now places them into permanent form, and the resulting volume is a colorful mosaic of early East Texas life. The author warns that the book "is not a history in the sense of beginning with the first settlement and chronologically recording the events of the county history. It is a history of about 125 families who were in the county prior to 1870, and of events and other items that were thought to be of interest." To be sure, the book is not history in the conventional manner. There is little about the book which would resemble the average historical work. Most of the articles are based on information and interviews given by descendants of the various families, and the book offers neither footnotes nor bibliography. This lack of documentation, however, becomes an asset rather than a defect, for the articles achieve a unique quality of freshness and spontaneity.

The articles, although written primarily by Mr. Russell, do include contributions by Mrs. Walter Young, Mr. J. A. Davis, Mr. E. C. Brice, Mr. Reuben R. R. Cook, Mr. H. P. Burford, Mr. A. L. Burford, and Judge R. T. Wilkinson. The first in the series of articles is a brief but inclusive historical background of Titus County and Northeast Texas. Ranging from biographical sketches of pioneer families to annotated listings of Titus County cemeteries and post offices, from law cases to professional baseball and oil wells, from baptizings to family feuds and outlaws, the articles contain a wealth of anecdotes and personal reflections of past years. This book was compiled through the cooperative efforts of Titus County residents, and they should be well pleased with their end product. But for this volume and others like it, much of the color and lore of early Texas life would fade into obscurity. Mr. Russell and his associates have prevented such a loss of Titus County's heritage, and for this they are to be commended.

WANDA L. ROARK
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Rawhide Texas. By Wayne Gard. Norman, Oklahoma (University of Oklahoma Press), 1965. xi+236 pp. Illustrations and index. $5.95.

As the author notes in his preface this is "a series of informal sketches of various aspects of pioneer life in Texas." Written by Dallas newspaperman Wayne Gard who has written six previous books about the American West, *Rawhide Texas* consists of 17 chapters dealing with aspects of life and labor in Texas during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Several chapters are devoted to general topics such as weather conditions,

transportation problems, and intellectual and cultural activities in early Texas, while other chapters are devoted to cattlemen, sheepherders, farmers, planters, Indians, doctors, ministers, lawyers, lawmen, editors, teachers, and hunters. Emphasis is placed upon stories of individual Texans, and together their stories form a composite picture of social conditions in the state. Readers of western history will be reminded of the various works of Everett Dick, whose *Sod House Frontier* has long been regarded as a classic study of social institutions on the Upper Plains.

Here are noted cattlemen of the state, such as Captain Richard King and Shanghai Pierce, great plantation owners such as Jared Groce, Julien S. Devereux, and Judge William W. Morris, lawmen such as Jack Hays and L. H. McNelly, frontier doctors such as P. C. Coleman and Henry Hoyt, and buffalo hunters such as the Mooar brothers. East Texas readers will note with interest that a chapter on "black gold" features the Spindletop discovery which marked the beginning of the modern fuel-oil industry.

This is an entertaining book, skillfully written and handsomely illustrated. Although it contains little new information it is a storehouse of interesting facts and figures about life in early Texas and forms a valuable supplement to the usual political histories found in text books. Unfortunately it does not contain footnote citations, a failure which will seriously limit the usefulness of the book to serious historians. Too, it would appear that some reorganization of materials within various chapters would provide for more overall unity of the work. And finally this reviewer feels the title of the book is misleading; discussion of such varied subjects as plantation homes, oil discoveries, and the Galveston storm of 1900 indicates the scope of the work is larger than the title would indicate.

RALPH A. WOOSTER
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William Stevenson: Riding Preacher. By Walter N. Vernon. Dallas (Southern Methodist University Press), 1964. xiii+78 pp. Illustrations, notes, and index. $1.45 (paperback).

This small biography of the man who was supposed to be the first Protestant minister to deliver a sermon in Texas proves the proposition that some scholars have been making for a number of years: There are too many book length works that should be, more properly, articles. Mr. Vernon's book is a perfect example. This slender volume contains 73 pages of text and notes, but much of the space is wasted on irrelevant information—particularly genealogy. The author has worked diligently in the source materials, but it is clear that these sources are limited. He uses much material, which is neither important nor relative, to add to the length of the work. Mr. Vernon needed an editor. That he did not find one is both obvious and unfortunate. The work should have been trimmed to an article of about twenty pages. Failure to edit has resulted in much of the book being not only irrelevant, but terribly dull.

This work traces, insofar as limited research material has allowed, the life of the Rev. William Stevenson, a Methodist frontier preacher. Stevenson was born in South Carolina in 1768. At twenty-four he moved to Ten-

nessee. There he married and moved to Virginia for a short while, then to Kentucky where he was converted to Methodism, then back to Tennessee where two years later he took up the ministry. From Tennessee he moved his large and growing family to Missouri. There he prospered, even running for public office, a race which he lost to Stephen F. Austin, but in 1815, he decided to ride a circuit in southwest Arkansas. It was during the first year of this task that, in violation of Mexican law, he first preached in northeast Texas. He then established himself on a permanent basis in Arkansas, serving for a time in the territorial legislature. His ministry in this area won the title of the "Father of Methodism in Arkansas." Stevenson then closed his career in Louisiana and lived there until his death in 1857.

Another major weakness of the work is that it fails to capture the spirit and character of frontier America of the period. With better organization and with some editing much of the wasted space could have been devoted to the atmosphere in which frontier ministers, such as Stevenson, worked.

The book is not, however, a total loss. It has some information about the frontier. It captures some of the religious sentiment of the time. And it tells a good deal about its subject. Yet one has the feeling that Rev. Stevenson, devoted to helping man and dedicated to the work of God, deserves better than Mr. Vernon was able to do for him.

CARL L. DAVIS
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Some Early Southeast Texas Families. By Thomas A. Wilson. Edited by Madeleine Martin. Houston (Lone Star Press), 1965. 174 pp. Illustrations, index. $6.50.

The prevalence of interest in and the practice of genealogical research has traditionally excited the cynicism and sometimes the envy of trained historians. Both callings lean heavily on the other for their tools of research and philosophical purpose, which is the tracing of man's path through the past ages to some modern, if temporary, station. They differ only in principle. The genealogist is usually interested in one man, or one family, whereas the historian is interested generally in men and how they interacted with other men to affect their age and subsequent ages. Frequently, however, they blend so completely as to erase this difference. In that case the genealogist is a pretty fair historian, and the historian is an accomplished genealogist, at least as far as his biographical subjects are concerned. Thus, this volume by Thomas A. Wilson is basically a work of genealogy based on the personal reminiscences of an early southeast Texas inhabitant, and it is also a valuable reference for the historian of the area.

Thomas Wilson was born in 1866, and his first childhood memories deal with the aftermath of the Civil War. He grew to maturity amid the rural development of Jasper and Newton counties, and learned firsthand the family relationship and principal events of individual lives which form the backbone of this book. Wilson's adult life was spent in several locations within the two counties, but its majority was passed in Kirbyville, a small lumbering town which is virtually on the line that separates them.

He engaged in several businesses that involved considerable public contact, and thus was able to maintain a good working knowledge of the births, marriages, and deaths that altered by deletion or addition the various family arrangements of southeast Texas.

In 1931 he began to write short sketches about the pioneer families of the area for periodical publication in the *Kirbyville Banner* and the *Newton News*. They were frequently incomplete, and though checked against other surviving veterans of those lusty years, sometimes inaccurate. For a number of years the articles lay fallow until Madeleine Martin edited them for the present publication. Her edition was a painstaking labor of checking county records for vital statistics and consulting with numerous people in Newton and Jasper counties to verify the nearly forgotten events of other lives. The result is a rich harvest. She has when possible fully identified persons mentioned only by abbreviation or casual reference, and provided additional information about many persons that was not known even to Wilson. In many respects, her footnotes are more valuable than the text, and they are obviously better substantiated. This is not to charge Wilson with deliberate inaccuracy or even much accidental misinterpretation; clearly, he knew where all the bodies were buried and did not hesitate to say so. His family histories are full of references to homicides, imprisonments, fast exits, and narrow escapes. They are equally full of accomplishments, religious devotion, educational attainment, and public service. In short, they present a good cross section of the kinds of lives these people led, and as is common to all of humanity, some of it is creditable and some of it is not.

There are no internal chapter divisions, nor are the families of the two counties appreciably divided, although Newton County seems to have contributed the preponderant number. For the 185 families considered, the following information is given: date of arrival in Texas, and past history; place of birth; name of mate and birth date; marriage date; birth and death of all children; and when possible, names and dates of their mates and children. As is suggested above, this mass of names and dates is sufficiently cemented with family anecdotes to preserve the work from the drabness of the census report. There are two factors of which the reader should be informed. First, some of the information is regrettably still possibly inaccurate; and second, this edition preserves the time sense in which the articles were originally witten. For example: "Uncle Cicero is still living and is nearly ninety years old" (p. 64); Uncle Cicero would be at least 120 now and undoubtedly has passed on to his reward. The mental gymnastics that this style sometimes requires is not really troublesome, so long as it is recognized.

This reviewer is personally familiar with the history of one branch of the McMahon family covered in these pages, and can testify to the accuracy of the information provided for them. Presumably this may serve as a representative sampling that will bear witness to the general accuracy of the entire piece.

The index is the hero of the volume. It is of course alphabetical, but all of the descendants of the family founders are listed beneath their gen-

eral paternal divisions, thus greatly facilitating cross-reference. Under this system there are approximately 4,000 individuals listed.

Finally, what is the merit of this volume? As Cooper Ragan's Foreword suggests, its value will increase with the years as more and more family members are born and then move away to Beaumont, or Houston or New York. Somewhere far away they will begin to wonder where it all started, perhaps they will even muse about piney woods and Cow Creek, and Great-Grandfather's Bounty Grant. The pressure of group society and the isolation of the crowd will compel many to seek roots and foundations in the soil of an earlier age. But *Some Early Southeast Texas Families* does not have to wait another thirty years to have value; it has it right now for everyone who just wants to know who Aunt Polly married, or when Uncle Jim died, or perhaps to see how many horse thieves were in *other* people's families.

ARCHIE P. McDONALD
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A History of Blanco County. By John W. Speer. Edited by Henry C. Armbruster. Austin (The Pemberton Press), 1965. iv+80 pp. Appendix of Blanco County officials, illustrations, and index. $7.50.

Blanco County, a lazy, small hill country county about thirty miles west of Austin, was originally a part of Burnet, Hays, Comal, and Gillespie Counties. Named for the Blanco River, which crosses its southern sector, the county became a political and governmental entity in 1858, five years after Captain James H. Callahan, a scout from Georgia, camped in the valley of the Blanco and became attached to its beauty.

John W. Speer, mercantile magnate in Blanco County in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, quite possibly was a resident of the county one year after its foundation. He apparently was a man who possessed a sharp mind and an unusual memory. Henry C. Armbruster, editor of the small volume, notes in his introduction that Speer was the recognized "scribe" of the county.

A History of Blanco County is a chronological presentation of Speer's recollections and observations; as such it constitutes primary source material. He includes comments on most events of local significance between the years 1853 and 1884—quite often, however, in terse, enigmatic references to passing events. He notes, for example, that "the beginning of 1861 found our people partaking of the excitement" of the Civil War, but omits any comment on the election of Lincoln and the resulting secession. Too, Speer gives only brief attention to the war experiences of the citizens of his area. "Scribe" Speer's wit abounds, particularly in his references to "draft dodging" and to monetary inflation and Confederate currency. The book also has value for its numerous references to Blanco sources of early income—cotton, cattle driving, sheep raising, and others. Like many volumes of reminiscences, Speer's story is strongly impregnated with names of early settlers and prominent local people. In "Chapter Fifteen" the "scribe" allows himself to wax philosophical and to slip into an attack about the local superintendent of schools; in the former instance he muses

about human fallibility, and in the latter he assails the new schoolman in the county as "a little finikin, band-boxy biped."

Professor Armbruster's editorial work is worthy of note. He has simplified and clarified most of the points in the narrative where unusual spelling and anachronistic punctuation would hinder the reader. Unfortunately for buffs of local Texas history, the chapters covering the years 1872-1874 and 1875-1878 are missing. Their absence is conspicuous, but it should be noted that Speer, writing in 1885, was not writing a complete catalog of occurrences. Sketches by Connie Armbruster will be appreciated by readers. Of special note is the appendix—a listing of Blanco County officials from earliest record to 1964.

Although *A History of Blanco County* is a slender volume, it will be a welcomed addition to the libraries of historians of the Texas hill country and to the state's several fine collections of Texana.

THOMAS L. CHARLTON
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Barnes F. Latrop, *Migration Into East Texas—1835-1860: A Study from the United States Census*, The Texas State Historical Association (Austin, 1949).

The modern developments of statistical technology and the imaginative application and methodology of scholars in a variety of disciplines enable the otherwise mute and colorless numbers and figures tabulated in the decennial appraisal of our population through the census to produce insightful glimpses into existing patterns of human behavior. The quantitative evaluations of the population through the censuses have always had routine uses of common knowledge to all social scientists. The demographic calculations involved in the apportionment of seats in the United States House of Representatives use the census schedules and the reports based upon them to determine whether or not the representation of any state need be increased or diminished. Census rolls indicate rather accurately where people are living, what they are doing, the size of each family, and numerous other factors of pertinence, depending upon the nature of the questions to be asked on the current census schedules prepared for use by the enumerators in the field. Most of the early censuses attempted no more than a rather simple tabulation of population with emphasis on status, age, and sex. Other than the heads of families, the reflections of people was portrayed primarily in numbers, rather than personalities.

The use of family records, biographical data, and residence statistics in census reports has great value for the researcher, insofar as it can portray something about the volume and direction of the movements of our increasingly mobile population. It is the author's thesis that there is a sizeable degree of inaccuracy and inadequacy in the traditional use of census statistics which tend to obscure the actual steps of population migration and which indicate little or nothing about the persons themselves.

This book is the result of an extensive investigation by the author based on a grant from the Rockefeller Committee of the Texas State Historical Association. The study itself utilized a new method of evaluating

census reports and unprinted census records which was intended to derive a greater store of knowledge about the sources and annual rates of population movements into a region, establish numerous characteristics of migrant families, and to give a more correct statistical picture of the "anatomy" of interstate migration. The scope of the study is circumscribed by using the census schedules from 1850 through the census of 1880. The author illustrates rather thoroughly that this actually reveals the nature of population ramblings from the 1835-1836 period up to the 1879-1880 period. Some nineteen counties in East Texas, broken down into groups comprising a northern, a central, and a southern section, are used as bases for the study. The author concedes that the control group of counties was neither fully indicative of migration patterns for the entire state of Texas nor certainly for the whole South. It was adequate to test and to demonstrate his innovations for the use of census reports and to illustrate the great flexibility and versatility of the device for scholars in many fields.

The neglect of unprinted census reports as valuable research sources for historians, political scientists, and sociologists, which the author decries, has been eroded considerably in the last twenty years. With the "child-ladder" method proposed and applied by the author, it is possible to detect with some precision and in really human terms the movement of persons into the nineteen counties in East Texas which formed the subjects of this pilot study. On the surface the procedure for determining the movement of a family from some other state to East Texas during the period covered by the study seems quite simple. This requires that the dates and places of the birth of children be perused, noting any changes in the residence of a family suggested by significant lapses in the time and place between births. The researcher must be careful to ascertain that all the listed children in the "ladder" are siblings, and other precautions must accompany the application of the formula.

While affirming the basic value of his method, the author balances his confidence in its efficacy by conceding some basic shortcomings which must be taken into account. Certain statistical corrections also need to be made. Some of these are caused by the primitive character of early census schedules and the inherent foibles of the field enumerators. The imprecision of public records, the fact that at least three types of migrants do not lend themselves to direct computation by his method, and a host of other variables somewhat limit the child-ladder formula. The author is quite candid about these limitations and makes no pretentious claims beyond the demonstrably practical applications of his procedures tested in the study he supervised. He maintains that the child-ladder method very reliably describes the direct or single move migration into Texas, though not so accurately for moves within the state or indirect moves through several states before arrival in Texas. The exaggerations which result from a simple use of the gross totals of census figures (overstatement of recent and understatement of earlier migration) are somewhat ameliorated by Professor Lathrop's formula. He effectively demonstrates that it can give worthy insights into migration into early East Texas as primarily a farm and family movement.

For the student of early East Texas lore, the book's chapter on the ori-

gins of the immigrants during the period should be helpful. The tables and charts and figures. supplemented by textual elaborations should be of monumental assistance, providing factual data in either a superficial study or one of more profound proportions. It should be helpful in any efforts to determine the ingredients and human forces which combined to produce the particular flavor which is characteristic of East Texas in the nineteenth century or today. The author's encouragement of greater use of census statistics and his demonstration of how fruitful it can be is graphically illustrated in his description of the primary sources of the migrants into East Texas and a number of factors which he presents as typical of these important movements of families and individuals from other parts of the United States. The versatility of his utilitarian approach to research is manifest in its applicability to every state or parts of every state which have realized the high volume influx of agricultural immigration during the period covered by Dr. Lathrop's investigations.

This book is not the book one would choose for "light reading to while away a cold winter evening." To the person who is not an experienced researcher, and more particularly one not acquainted with the field of statistics, the author's explanations of his child-ladder method can be confusing. The book's primary virtues lie in the important stimulus which it can give to readers in the social sciences for opening up new avenues of patterns of human behavior. The book should be of particular interest to the provincial or local historian or political scientist. The child-ladder method is especially adaptable to their needs.

For researchers in the field, the author has suggested the depositories for census returns of the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth census (1850-1880) in the Texas State Library and the Archives Collection of the Library of the University of Texas as good starting places for their studies. Of particular note for the beginning user of census returns is the author's admonition to be aware of the imperfections in the data available in these resources. To overcome these, the author suggests that the student of the data equip himself with a thorough study of the critical literature in the field, to inspect carefully the particular returns, both as to questions and answers, and to account for the element of human error inevitably involved in census taking. In the process, the author provides some valuable, though not too numerous bibliographical references which could widen the scope of study for the serious student or researcher. His examples of a sort of inter-column movement from one table and figure to another and the relationships which can produce more imaginative conclusions for the researcher are very valuable, even to the trained scholar.

Professor Lathrop strikes a happy balance between the shortcomings of census statistics and the great store of knowledge which they encompass and can disclose to the astute observer. Probably his most interesting assertion is that the thorough and open-minded study of the census returns with which he spent so much time can greatly improve our knowledge and understanding of the common man in the mid-nineteenth century. On the whole, the book is of considerable worth both as a guide to other sources and as a source itself.

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